

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Classification Change Request		
Proposed Implementation Date:	1/1/13		
Proponent:	Royce Applegate, Lessee of State Lease #7989		
Location:	NW1/4, Sec. 34, T20N, R13E		
County:	Fergus	Common Schools	

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Land Classification changes from agricultural cropland to grazing land.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:

Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

Mt. DNRC-Lewistown Unit Office
Mel Martin-farmer/rancher
Royce Applegate, Lessee

2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:

None

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

The "No Action" alternative
The alternative to complete a classification change from Agricultural cropland to grazing land

III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:

Consider the presence of fragile, compactable or unstable soils. Identify unusual geologic features. Specify any special reclamation considerations. Identify any cumulative impacts to soils.

The soils at the cropland acreage site are of the Kabar series. The Kabar series consists of deep, well drained soils on terraces and fans. These soils formed in clayey alluvium. These soils are fine, Montmorillonitic Borollic Camborthids. The soils and topography adjacent to this site are very unstable Arrow Creek Breaks; highly susceptible to slumping and sliding. The surrounding topography is one good reason to re-classify the requested acreage from cropland to grazing.

5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:

Identify important surface or groundwater resources. Consider the potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality. Identify cumulative effects to water resources.

Arrow Creek goes through this section with another side channel drainage bordering the site. Degradation of water is not expected. Improved water filtration is to be expected with this classification change to permanent cover.

6. AIR QUALITY:

What pollutants or particulate would be produced? Identify air quality regulations or zones (e.g. Class I air shed) the project would influence. Identify cumulative effects to air quality.

Pollutants or particulates will not be produced.

7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:

What changes would the action cause to vegetative communities? Consider rare plants or cover types that would be affected. Identify cumulative effects to vegetation.

There are no rare plants or cover types present. A permanent cover of legumes and grasses will maintain soil stability. These will be planted in the spring of 2013.

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:

Consider substantial habitat values and use of the area by wildlife, birds or fish. Identify cumulative effects to fish and wildlife.

Aquatic life will not be adversely affected. There should be very little change to wildlife habits within this acreage. This re-classification site is only a small part of a large Arrow Creek Bottom wildlife corridor.

9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:

Consider any federally listed threatened or endangered species or habitat identified in the project area. Determine effects to wetlands. Consider Sensitive Species or Species of special concern. Identify cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.

At this time, no known unique, endangered, fragile or limited environmental resources have been identified within the proposed project area. A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program identified several Species of Concern: Townsend's Big-eared Bat, Black tailed Prairie dog, Hoary bat, Fringed Myotis, Dwarf Shrew, Preble's Shrew, Northern Goshawk, Baird's Sparrow, Sprague's Pipet, Great Blue heron, Burrowing Owl, American Bittern, Ferruginous Hawk, Chest-nut collared Long Spur, Veery, Greater Sage-grouse, Brown Creeper, Mountain Plover, Bobolink, Pinyon Jay, Cassin's Finch, Loggerhead Shrike, Clark's Nutcracker, Long-billed Curlew, Brewer's Sparrow, and the Pacific Wren.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

There are no historical, paleontological or archaeological resources present.

11. AESTHETICS:

Determine if the project is located on a prominent topographic feature, or may be visible from populated or scenic areas. What level of noise, light or visual change would be produced? Identify cumulative effects to aesthetics.

This project will not be visible from any populated areas. There should not be any excessive noise or light associated with the classification change.

12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:

Determine the amount of limited resources the project would require. Identify other activities nearby that the project would affect. Identify cumulative effects to environmental resources.

There are no other activities nearby that would affect this project.

13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:

List other studies, plans or projects on this tract. Determine cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of current private, state or federal actions in the analysis area, and from future proposed state actions in the analysis area that are under MEPA review (scoped) or permitting review by any state agency.

None.

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.</i>• <i>Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.</i>• <i>Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.</i>

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

Human health and safety will greatly increase if this request for classification change is authorized. The lessee has complained to the Lewistown Unit Office that it is no longer safe for him to keep farming this cropland. He cannot get anyone else to farm it for him, due to the steepness of slope and unsafe trail and bridge needing major repairs from the 2011 floods.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.

The School Trust revenue will decrease with the proposed classification change. Agricultural activities would all be for livestock production and grazing instead of small grain production.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:

Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to the employment market.

New jobs will not be created.

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:

Estimate tax revenue the project would create or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to taxes and revenue.

The tax base will not be affected.

18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:

Estimate increases in traffic and changes to traffic patterns. What changes would be needed to fire protection, police, schools, etc.? Identify cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services

Additional services will not be required.

19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:

List State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, and other zoning or management plans, and identify how they would affect this project.

None.

20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:

Identify any wilderness or recreational areas nearby or access routes through this tract. Determine the effects of the project on recreational potential within the tract. Identify cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.

This valley is a wildlife corridor that the proposed site is in. There are hunting opportunities within this section. The classification change from cropland to grazing land will have very limited if any affect upon wildlife. There will be no direct or cumulative effects on recreation or wilderness activities.

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:

Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify cumulative effects to population and housing.

Additional housing will not be a requirement of this proposal.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

Disruption is not likely. There are no native, unique or traditional lifestyles or communities in the vicinity that would be impacted by the proposal.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

There should be no shift in the quality of the area.

24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:

Estimate the return to the trust. Include appropriate economic analysis. Identify potential future uses for the analysis area other than existing management. Identify cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

The new revenue to the Common School Trust from these 58 acres would be approximately \$500.00 annually from an AUM rate of 50.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Barny D. Smith
	Title: Lewistown Unit Manager

Signature: /s/ Barny D. Smith	Date: 10/3/12
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V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

The alternative to change the classification from Agricultural cropland to grazing land

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

Minimal negative impacts are expected with this classification change. Revenue to the School Trust will be less for this acreage, but human health and safety will be improved for the lessee.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:☐

EIS

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More Detailed EA

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No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Clive Rooney
	Title: Area Manager
Signature: /s/ Clive Rooney	
Date: 10/13/12	